

From the office of

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Greetings from the MN NRCS State Conservationist, William Hunt

As we draw to the end of Fiscal Year 2004 I would like to take this opportunity to thank each and everyone of the members of the Conservation Partnership for a job well done. Your efforts continue to lead the country in several areas. None of these accomplishments would have been possible without your strong partnership support.

A signup was held for the Conservation Security Program (CSP) July 6th - July 30, 2004 for the Blue Earth River Watershed which encompasses parts of Minnesota and Iowa. The Blue Earth River Watershed was one of 18 watersheds in the nation selected to roll out CSP for the first time during FY 2004. NRCS employees and the Conservation Partnership worked tirelessly to make sure the CSP signup a success. Thank you for your outstanding work effort!

While we ask for and you give the agency much outstanding work efforts, we recognize and support the necessity of your personal quality time away from your job with your family and friends. Do schedule with your supervisor and enjoy your much deserved time off.

WILLIAM HUNT State Conservationist



L-R Lyle Paul, Peggy Pahl, James Moseley, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture and James Pahl are signing the first CSP contract in US History!



L-R Steve Breaker, Acting DC for the Mankato Field Office, James Moseley, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Peggy and James Pahl, CSP program participants



William Hunt presented the Pahl families with Dickcissel t-shirt. The Dickcissel bird is the targeted wildlife species for the Blue Earth River CSP Watershed.

WesMin RC&D Recognizes Two NRCS Employees with the Friend of WesMin RC&D Awards



William Hunt, State Conservationist and James Ayres, Assistant State Conservationist for Field Operations in Fergus Falls were named the 2004 Recipient of the Friend of WesMin RC&D awards at the 40th Wes Min RC&D Anniversary celebration on July 14, 2004 in Wadena. Mr. Hunt and Jim Ayres have both been supportive with the RC&D efforts in west-central Minnesota. The recognition which was received was deserving and certainly speaks highly of NRCS's continued appreciation and acknowledgement for the RC&D Program in Minnesota.

Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility award



Tessa Garcia was named the 2004 recipient of the "Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility" award. These awards are given in recognition of the special efforts made by the recipients who inspire hope and possibility to those who know and work with

them. Tessa works in the State Administrative Section and is currently serving as the Minnesota NRCS Hispanic Emphasis Program Manager. Sandra Jerzak, the Federal Women's Program Manager for NRCS in Minnesota received the Women Inspiring Hope and Possibility award on Tessa Garcia's behalf at the National Federal Women's Program Conference in Nashville, Tennessee. Sandy presented the award to Tessa Garcia at the Asian Pacific Islander Conference.

Photo above, L-R Tessa Garcia and Sandra Jerzak

Current Developments



Straight River WRP Event in Owatonna, Minnesota

Ducks Unlimited signed a Memo of Understanding with USDA NRCS on July 28, 2004 in Owatonna, MN. Ducks Unlimited signed a Memo of Understanding with NRCS Chief Bruce Knight. "This 5-year agreement recognizes the importance of public and private conservation partnerships to wetland and wildlife habitat objectives" said Knight."

A special thank you to Noel Frank, District Conservationist in the Owatonna field office, Tim Koehler, Assistant State Conservationist-Programs and Karin Nordling, NRCS student trainee for making this WRP event in southeast Minnesota possible!



Left-Right, William Hunt, State Conservationist, Jim Connaughton, Chair of the President's Council on Environmental Quality and State Senator Dennis Frederickson



NRCS Chief Bruce Knight signed the Memo July 28, 2004 in Owatonna, Minnesota

WRP group at the Straight River event near Owatonna, MN



July, August, September 2004

Soil and Water Conservation Society (SWCS) International Meeting

The Minnesota SWCS Chapter served as host of the July 24 - 28, 2004 SWCS International meeting in St. Paul. The last time a SWCS conference was held in Minnesota was back in 1976. Robin Martinek, NRCS employee served as the Local Arrangements Chair. For over 2 1/2 years the local Minnesota Chapter and it's various volunteers have worked on planning a successful conference.

Earth Team volunteers were used at the conference. State Earth Team Coordinator, Cutrina Moreland, worked closely with the SWCS Volunteer Coordinator, Shannon Bengston to make the use of Earth Team volunteers possible. SWCD supervisors and staff, along with RC&D Councils joined together with the Minnesota SWCS Chapter to make certain the conference ran smoothly. The NRCS support at the SWCS conference was greatly appreciated.

Pictorial highlights from the SWCS Conference in Saint Paul, Minnesota



Shannon Bengston, Soil Conservationist from the Thief River Falls field office served as the overall Volunteer Coordinator for the SWCS Conference..

Cutrina Moreland, NRCS State Earth Team Coordinator worked closely with all of the SWCS volunteers which showcased Minnesota's cadre of Earth Team volunteers!



L-R, Former SCS Chief Norm Berg and Vic Ruhland, NRCS Earth Team Volunteer. Norm Berg grew up in Pine County, Minnesota and was glad to be back to Minnesota for the SWCS Conference!



Wild Turkey Woodlands Field Day

NRCS and the National Turkey Federation, along with other area organizations recently, partnered to sponsor The Wild Turkey Woodlands Field Day in Fillmore County. Two landowners showcased their farms for more than 60 attendees to help educate landowners in a variety of habitat improvement projects. Both farms had an extensive history of conservation and habitat practice implementation effort, thus allowing event participants to experience established habitat improvement projects and practices. The event gave attendees a chance to visualize what these practices may do in helping them meet their own habitat improvement vision. NRCS presenters included Mark Oja, State Biologist on Forestry Woodland Management and Sue Glende, local District Conservationist on cost-share opportunities and Whole Farm Planning. Special credit goes to Bob Joachim, Soil Conservation Technician in Fillmore County for assisting with securing a location for the event and to Colin Williams, Soil Conservation Technician in Winona County for serving as coordinator and field day organizer.

Pictures below are from the Wild Turkey Woodlands Field Day in Fillmore County, Minnesota



Asian Pacific Islander Organization Conference held in Minnesota

by Pooh Vongkhamdy, API National President

The Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) of NRCS held its Sixth Annual Training Conference in Bloomington, Minnesota July 26-29.

APIO was honored to have NRCS Chief Bruce Knight in attendance. Mr. Knight participated in a Memorandum of Understanding Signing Ceremony between NRCS and the University of



Minnesota – Twin Cities and the University of Wisconsin – River Falls for the Asian Pacific Islander Pilot Scholarship Program. Chief Knight, Dr. Ann Hill Duin, representing the University of Minnesota – Twin Cities, and Dr. Steve Ridley, representing the University of Wisconsin – River Falls participated in the ceremony. The API Scholarship Program is designed to help provide a diverse pool of qualified graduates for jobs with NRCS. NRCS will provide each selected student funding for a full scholarship at one of these partnership universities.

A few highlights from the conference included announcing four APIO scholarship winners for 2004. The students who received the scholarship were from Minnesota, Montana, Arizona, and Oklahoma. Mr. Hunt was recognized with Special Achievement and Presidential Awards from APIO. The other Minnesota employees who received Presidential Awards were Ann English, John Nicholson, Bill Lorenzen, Julie MacSwain, and Susan Ploetz.

On July 29th a conservation farm tour was conducted. An Asian America/Pacific Islander farms south of the Twin Cities was visited where Yang Vang, an organic farmer, recently purchased 116 acres of land in Dakota County. Two other farms that were visited contained wetlands and a PL-566 floodwater retarding structure. Several NRCS employees who played a significant role in making these tours possible included Tom Steiger, DC from the Goodhue field office, John Crellin, A-4 ARC, Michelle Wohlers, DC from the Farmington field office, ASTC's Tim Wilson, Brooklyn Center and John Nicholson, Rochester. Overall the API Conference received several positive comments. API raised more than \$5,000 for the API scholarship fund and nine lifetime Organization members were recruited.



Farm Fest in Redwood County

Farmers and interested people in agriculture annually flock to Gillford Estates in Redwood County to learn more about agriculture. If you haven't been to Farm Fest it is definitely worth a trip.

You will have the opportunity to learn, meet new people and see the newest technologies that are available in the field of agriculture.

William Hunt, State Conservationist, joined together with John Monson, State Executive Director for Farm Service Agency as speaker for a Farm Fest forum which featured a discussion of the Conservation Provisions of the 2002 Farm Bill. This forum was well attended and provided the Farm Fest participants with excellent up-to-date information on the Farm Bill.

During the last day of Farm Fest, USDA Agriculture Secretary Ann Veneman spoke at the Farm Fest.



Ann Veneman stopped by both the NRCS booth and the FSA and RD booths. Pictured above are employees from FSA and NRCS who were in attendance at Farm Fest.

One step at a time is the best way to go

When going through life and traveling in the direction of your dreams, the best way to get ahead is the simplest way: Take it one step at a time.

Don't look over your shoulder; if you do, you'll feel the weight of all your yesterdays upon you.

And don't worry about what lies ahead. by the time you get to the bend in the road or the crest of the hill, you are going to be better and stronger than you ever were before.

Area 1

Forestry Practices Tour

By Debra Walchuk, District Conservationist

On September 1st the Area 1 Plant Materials Committee conducted a tour of applied conservation practices for NRCS and SWCD employees in the area. This year's tour highlighted the use of woody plant materials.

One of the stops included a visit to the farm of Area 1 Conservation Cooperator of the Year. The Continuous CRP (CCRP) riparian buffer planting included the use of



chemical site preparation, the application of deer repellent to seedlings prior to planting, machine planting and follow-up mowing. *In the above photo, Don Hanson of the Bagley area DNR Forestry accompanied the group on the tour to discuss the projects and answer questions.*

A few other stops featured CCRP riparian buffers and challenges that had occurred during the planting of the buffer areas and how fencing was utilized to exclude horses from the creek and the riparian buffer. The tour participants were able to view aspen trees that were planted into sod prepared with herbicided strips using a planter with the scalper attachments removed.

It is now expected the trees will survive the second time around because the producer followed the recommended site preparation plan!



Picture above depicts where the herbicide Transline has been applied for killing thistles on the CCRP CP22 practice.

Everyone seemed to enjoy the hilly pastures, woodlands and fields of recently frozen crops in the area to observe how tree and shrub practices are applied in the eastern part of Area 1.



Personnel News

New hiree *Dustin Jasken* has been hired as Tribal Liaison for the White Earth Indian Reservation. Dustin is a recent graduate of North Dakota State University with a B.S. degree in Natural Resources Management. His office is located at the White Earth Natural Resources Department near Ponsford, MN. The White Earth Reservation encompasses all of Mahnommen County and portions of Becker and Clearwater counties, which lie within NRCS areas one and two. As Tribal Liaison, this position is designed to assist tribal programs/staff and tribal members with natural resources related projects that are of mutual interest to the NRCS and the White Earth Reservation.

New Hiree *Matt Baltes* began his duties as GIS Specialist in Area 1 in August. Before coming to NRCS, Matt worked for FSA in Bemidji providing GIS training and assistance to FSA offices in the State. Matt is a graduate of Bemidji State University with an emphasis on geography and GIS applications.

New Hiree *James Pendroy* was hired in July as a Student Career Experience Program (SCEP) student in Red Lake Falls, Minnesota. Jim is a student at the University of Minnesota-Crookston majoring in Natural Resource Management and is slated to graduate in the spring of 2005.

Promotions Congratulations to *Jim Schwab*, DC, Hallock and *John Anderson*, DC, Roseau on their promotions.

Area 2

WesMin RC&D 40th

By Julie MacSwain

WesMin Resource Conservation and Development (RC&D) Council celebrated its 40th Anniversary on July 14, 2004 in Wadena, Minnesota. The Crow Wing River Canoe Trail in Wadena County, Minnesota became RC&D's first RC&D project in the United States 40 years ago. Back in 1964, Minnesota Governor Rolvaag dedicated the Crow Wing Canoe Trail and called it "One of the most exciting contributions to the art of resource management in our State's history." The Crow Wing River has inspired many people with its beauty and rich treasures that it contained.

WesMin RC&D, one of the oldest RC&D projects in the Nation has contributed to improving the quality of life for the diverse population and resources in 14 Minnesota counties (Becker, Clay, Douglas, Grant, Pope, Todd, Wadena, Wilken, Cass, Crow Wing, East and West Otter Tail, Morrison, Stevens, and Traverse Counties). Today, WesMin RC&D is nationally respected for its work in natural resource conservation and education and for developing new industry and opportunities for the residents of rural Minnesota.

Since WesMin's inception, 640 projects have been completed with projects totaling \$85,705,243 in Federal grants, foundation grants, and donations with over \$15,980,000 of In-kind contributions.



From left to right, John Rife, Founding Board Member-Wes Min RC&D, William Hunt, State Conservationist and Taylor Oldroyd, Special Assistant to the NRCS Chief

Current Developments



Personnel News

New hires

Area 2 is happy to announce the hiring of *Bill Marken*, GIS specialist, who reported to the Fergus Falls AO on July 12th. Also reporting to the Detroit Lakes FO was our new grazing specialist, *Mark Hayek*, who reported on July 26th. Mark transferred from the Roseau FO where he had been their SCT.

Jonathan Sellnow also reported to the Detroit Lakes FO on August 23rd, beginning his first year as a Soil Conservationist at his initial training location.

Welcome one and all - Bill, Mark and Jonathan, to the beauty of Area II and the fishing capital of Minnesota!

Promotions

Congratulations to *Sharon Lean* and *Jim Fritz* who were selected and promoted to GS-12 District Conservationists on May 30th for the Moorhead and Long Prairie FO's, respectively.

Pictorial memories of WesMin's 40th Anniversary



Crow Wing Canoe Trail re-dedicated

Dean Schmidt, Wes Min RC&D Coordinator helped make the 40th event another Minnesota success!



July, August, September 2004

Area 3

Conservation Feature Story

Soil Survey to be started in Pine County

By Mary Kay Anderson, District Manager

A long-awaited soil survey will finally be started in Pine County this fall. For many years the Pine County Soil & Water Conservation District and the Natural Resources Conservation Service – Hinckley Office have wanted to see a soil survey get underway, but were never able to secure support from three necessary agencies at one time. Now, due to the full support of the Pine County Board of Commissioners, the NRCS State Office, and the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources, the project has been officially approved.

A soil survey will be extremely beneficial to Pine County in so many ways in regards to development and recreation. By using a soil survey, we will be able to determine soil type as it pertains to land use for development and recreation, as well as for other activities such as forestry, agriculture, septic systems, excavation, construction, and tourism.

The purpose of the soil survey is that it be used as an important technical tool, and as a resource guide, to better protect our natural resources. It will be used to assist landowners and land use managers in making appropriate decisions when it comes to specific items such as wetlands, septic systems, clear-cutting hillsides, applying pesticides, plantings, drainage, topsoil removal, and building. By using this soil survey, we hope to better guide landowners in making sound land use decisions. For example, we would like to prevent them from trying to build a house in a wetland, or a business that would discharge waste directly onto soils that would infiltrate rapidly.

This fall, a Soil Survey Project Leader will be hired and will do some investigative soils probing and will also work on establishing a soils mapping legend. By July 1, 2005, we anticipate two other soil scientists will be hired. The project will take approximately 12 years to complete. *Many "thanks" go out to all of the individuals who helped make this a reality* – Bob Korth, NRCS – Hinckley, for all of his hard work with the initial proposal, the Pine County SWCD & District Board of Supervisors, the NRCS – State & Area offices, the Pine County Board of Commissioners and Coordinator, the Pine County Water Management Plan Task Force, Board of Water and Soil Resources, and the Legislative Commission on Minnesota Resources.



Career Enhancement Assignments

Yamika Stokes – Acting District Conservationist (DC), Milaca Field Office (FO)
Julie Lindner – Acting DC, North Branch FO
Shannon Bengtson – Acting DC, Milaca FO
Roger Erickson – Non Monetary Award – Grazing Land Conservation Initiative (GLCI) educational efforts
Phylliss Erickson – Non Monetary Award – GLCI educational efforts

Personnel News

New hires

John Zinn, Grazing Specialist, Grand Rapids, MN, EOD 8/9/2004
Jodi Smolnikar-Joki, Miscellaneous Assistant, Laurentian RC&D, Duluth, MN, EOD 8/9/04.
Paula Waggoner, Soil Conservation Technician (WAE), Cambridge FO, EOD 8/9/04
Diane Grover, Accounting Technician, Duluth Area Office, EOD 9/7/04
Kristy Baross, GIS Specialist, Duluth Area Office, EOD 9/20/04
Tim Byrns, District Conservationist, North Branch FO, EOD 10/18/04
Shannon Bengtson, District Conservationist, Milaca FO, EOD 10/18/04

Promotions

Julie Lindner, GS-7, Soil Conservation Technician, effective 5/30/04
Marge Sella, GS-11, District Conservationist, effective 5/30/04

Current Developments

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Area 4

Student Trainee Orientation Tour

By Michelle Wohlers, District Conservationist

A Student Trainee Orientation Tour was held June 22, 2004, in Dakota County. The tour started at Laurie Otte's residence with rolls, fruit, coffee, and juice. Dwain Otte, Dakota SWCD board member started the tour with introductions.



SWCD and NRCS staff explain to the students information about farm equipment at the Tom Otte farmstead

Several stops occurred during the Student Orientation tour. Students were shown a wide array of conservation practices ranging from tree planting, wetland restoration, no-till, upland and wetland restoration as well as feedlot control structures. These tours provided the students with an excellent snapshot in the importance of identifying resource concerns and ways in which the resource concerns can be solved through the use of conservation practices and various State and Federal Programs, such as with the Minnesota State Feedlot Grant Dollars, Reinvent in Minnesota and Environmental Quality Incentives Program.



Group photo of the 2004 NRCS students



SWCD and NRCS staff explain to the students information about farm equipment at the Tom Otte farmstead.

Current Developments



Awards

Pat Gehling – Non Monetary Award – Efforts in providing GPS Training to Area 4, Foley FO
George Montgomery – Non Monetary Award – Efforts in providing GPS Training to Area 4, Stillwater FO
Matt Schaar – Non Monetary Award – Provided EQIP technical services in Dakota County in the absence of DC and for assistance provided on Student Trainee orientation Tour, Farmington FO

Michelle Wohlers – Non Monetary Award – Assistance provided on the Student Trainee Orientation Tour and assistance provided on the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) Conservation Tour, Farmington FO
John Crellin – Non Monetary Award – Acting DC for Dakota County and assistance Provided on the APIO Conservation Tour, Brooklyn Center AO

Craig Peterson – Non Monetary Award – Efforts in organizing and providing engineering training to the student trainees, Brooklyn Center AO

Peter Weikle – Non Monetary Award – Efforts in organizing and providing soils training to the student trainees, Brooklyn Center AO

Matt Nicholson – Non Monetary Award – Dedicated service for providing technical service to the field office and area staffs, Brooklyn Center AO

Tiffany Jones – Non Monetary Award – Assistance to the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) Conference, Brooklyn Center AO

Roberto Castro – Non Monetary Award – Assistance to the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) Conference, Brooklyn Center AO

Tanysha Scott – Non Monetary Award – Assistance to the Asian Pacific Islander Organization (APIO) Conference, Brooklyn Center AO
Stearns County SWCD received the Wenck River Friendly Community Award 8/10/04

Benton NRCS and SWCD office recently recognized a group of landowners in Mayhew Lake Township Section 13 as the Outstanding Conservation Cooperators for 2004.

Personnel News

New hires-

Tanysha Scott, Soil Conservation Technician (WAE), Brooklyn Center, EOD 6/27/04

Promotions *Andy Porupsky*, GS-6, Soil Conservation Technician, effective 7/25/04

Lee Zabinski, GS-7, Soil Conservation Technician, effective 7/25/04

Mike Vasquez, GS-7, Agricultural Engineer, effective 7/25/04

July, August, September 2004

Area 5

NRCS Employees Discover Tribal Culture Riches by Mike Appel

A Harmony Workshop was held at the Prairie's Edge Casino Resort on the Upper Sioux Reservation, Granite Falls from August 2-6, 2004. The workshop consisted of a mix of classroom and field work. Thirty-eight NRCS registrants and one FSA employee participated. Monday's session had cultural breakouts that taught how to tan hides, work with pipestone, beading and wild rice harvest.

Tuesday covered the tribal government, medicinal plants and treaties. A field trip was planned on Wednesday which toured the Sioux Uprising, Lower Sioux Agency and the Jeffers Petroglyphs. *An evening campfire with storytelling ended the day.*



On Thursday, the group helped set up the Wacipi (Pow Wow). The group learned some Dakota language. The Harmony Workshop ended on Friday with the "talking circle" and blessing by the Elders. Participants were encouraged to stay the weekend for the official Wacipi Celebration.

A special thanks to: *Helen Blue-Redner, Tribal Chair, Teresa Peterson, Vice-Chair* for all the wonderful help in sponsoring and arranging this event. The planning committee consisted of *Teresa Peterson, Mike Appel, Paul Bridgland, Joe and Pam Wiltsey, and Mark Rose plus several tribal members* who gave presentations, blessings, dances and support to all of us.



Awards

A big thanks to all those who helped in Jackson County with Conservation Security Program were *Kasey Reed, Larry Schmidt, Mike Nienaber, Joel Poppe, Brent Pavelko, Brian Nyborg, Dawn Timmer, Brian Christiansen, Allisa Wendland and Rich Giles.*

A dickcissel spot-award T-shirt was given for their efforts. Several spot-award GLCI hats were awarded at a recent DC/SCT meeting. Recipients helped with grazing signups/plans in recent EQIP and GRP application periods.

Personnel News

New hires

Beth Collins – GIS, Marshall AO
Vonnie Nilges – Accounting Technician Clarkfield FO:
Douglas Dragseth – DC Marshall
Sarah Zwach – SCEPT Soil Conservationist
Chandri McCracken, ET Volunteer, Marshall AO
Richard Bergscheid and *Nathan Blankers* Part-time SCEPT's

Promotions

Allisa Wendland, SCT in Slayton

Retirements

Robert Marthaler -- after 42 years of service to the NRCS/SCS. Open house for his farewell was on September 2nd at the Pipestone field office. We will definitely miss him.

Name change: *April Schultz*, Soil Conservationist in Benson was recently married and she is now April Sullivan. Congratulations April!

Current Developments

July, August, September 2004

Area 6

Blue Earth River Watershed --CSP

Minnesota had it's first Conservation Security Program (CSP) Watershed selected in FY 2004. MN NRCS employees in south-central Minnesota met the challenge and were able to successfully complete all of the eligible CSP applications for the signup.

Much of this success was due in part to people partnering together to ensure the program was a success. Dedication, extra working hours and our employees and conservation partnership's strong ability to work with others were the seeds for this success.

A major paradigm shift for the Program signup occurred with the CSP program. For the first time ever farmers who were interested in CSP had to take time to fill out the CSP self-assessment workbook which was their first step to whether or not they would be eligible as a agricultural producer for CSP.

Throughout this new process NRCS learned a great deal about working with a new program and how important it was to communicate CSP in different ways to the potential group of clientele. No doubt the lessons learned in the Blue Earth River Watershed will be a shining examples for those of us lucky enough to have a CSP watershed project next year!

The first CSP contract in the United States was signed on the Pahl farm in Vernon Center, Minnesota on August 26, 2004. James Mosley, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture is holding the NRCS sign and is surrounded by the entire Pahl family



Awards

The following NRCS employees received a non-monetary spot award for their efforts in program delivery of the Conservation Security Program. Each of these employees received a Dickcissel T-shirt. The Dickcissel bird and the Red-headed Woodpecker are the targeted wildlife species for the Blue Earth River Watershed. *Kasey Reed, Larry Schmidt, Steve Breaker, Jason Sickmann, Ryan Kruse, Megan Lene, Krista Olson and Traci Meist.*



NRCS and USDA employees who were in attendance at the CSP signing ceremony were adorned in a Dickcissel T-shirt. In the 1st row, kneeling from L-R Susan Ploetz, Megan Ulrich, Julie MacSwain and Krista Olson. 2nd row L-R, Steve Breaker, Amy Stratton, Bill Hunt, Ann English, Deputy Secretary of Agriculture, Jim Moseley, Kasey Reed and Larry Schmidt.

Personnel News

New hires Shawn Weick began as GIS Specialist in St. Peter on August 8, 2004

Promotions Yamika Stokes begins as DC in St. Peter on November 28.

Reassignment Phoukham Vongkhandy begins as DC in Mankato on November 1.

Relocation Pat Bay's Computer Specialist's duty station has been relocated to the St. James field office effective August 8, 2004

Area 7

Dodge County Field Office ANNUAL FOOD DRIVE RESTOCKS AREA FOOD SHELVES

More than 3,200 pounds of food collected

By: Karen Buckley, Area Public Affairs Specialist,
Rochester

During the month of July, NRCS, Farm Service Agency and Soil & Water Conservation Districts in southeast Minnesota completed their Annual Food Drive Competition. USDA and SWCD employees in seven counties within southeast Minnesota organized food collections for donation to area food shelves. Since the project began in 2002, the agencies have collected nearly 10,000 pounds of food, providing for more than 3000 households in southeast Minnesota. This drive supports area food shelves by replenishing their supplies through the summer season.



To add a little fun and incentive to this year's food drive, three mystery items were chosen by persons outside of USDA and SWCD and sealed in envelopes until the end of the competition. When the envelopes were opened, the counties that brought in the mystery items received an extra 100 points to their county collection total, per item. For the second consecutive year, the Dodge Center NRCS Service Center collected the highest percentage of food with 94.3 pounds per person, or 943 total pounds. USDA and SWCD collectively brought in a total of 3,251 pounds of non-perishable food items.

"The Annual Food Drive Competition is just one of the important projects we sponsor each year," said Lori Quinnell, Area Food Drive Coordinator. "The Agency has a long history of giving back to our communities in both time and contributions. Though competition between the counties for the highest collection became stiff, there were no losers in this effort, only winners.

"Each year, NRCS employees rally together to give their support to the Annual Food Drive Competition and this year is no different," said John Nicholson, Assistant State Conservationist for NRCS in Rochester. "Our employees' giving back is what makes NRCS such a great agency to work for."

Current Developments



Awards

Karen Buckley, Area NRCS Public Affairs Specialist-Rochester, Minnesota -Non-Monetary Award for assistance provided to the Asian Pacific Islander Conference

John Nicholson, ASTC-FO Rochester, Minnesota-Non-Monetary Award for assistance provided to the Asian Pacific Islander Conference

Personnel News

New hires

Christiane Slivinski is the new GIS Specialist for Area 7. Christiane, a native of Quebec, Canada, has a BS in natural resources, a Master's degree in wetland ecology and GIS certification from St. Mary's University in Winona. She is a welcome addition to Area 7!

Jackie Byam is a new Soil Conservation Technician in Austin. A graduate of the University of Wisconsin-River Falls, Jackie holds a Bachelor of Science degree in Conservation. Welcome Jackie!

Promotions and Reassignment

Yamika Stokes, Soil Conservationist in Winona County, has accepted the District Conservationist position at St. Peter field office.

Clayton Schmitz, Soil Conservationist Trainee in Winona County, returned to finish his education at Crookston. He will be graduating this fall and plans on pursuing a career with NRCS.

July, August, September 2004



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suggestions to:
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Current Developments is published quarterly.

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